



Energy Security: trends, developments, and options for Azerbaijan

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Working paper # 44
CIS-Baltic States Program

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The quest for energy security will no doubt be a major arena for the consolidation of a new international status quo in the following years. One of the reasons for this assertion is that the traditional north-south patterns of energy consumption are now being radically transformed (Figure 1); most dramatically, China evolved from being a net exporter of oil in 1993 to being dependent on oil imports for over 50% of its consumption in 2004 (Williams 2007). In fact the case of China epitomizes the erosion of traditional North-South notions of economic regionalism we have held for decades in terms of economic development, military capability, trade patterns, etc. In this fluid geopolitical environment, where multipolarism is the emerging international relations cliché, Azerbaijan must make informed policy choices for the future of its energy industry. This paper attempts to theorize the global context of these choices in view of presenting an informed discussion of threats and opportunities for Azerbaijan in the immediate future.

Theoretical Framing

Following the debate conducted within the realms of the Euro-Atlantic community which, naturally, takes in the wider Black Sea/Caspian region, one may observe that there are two, albeit not necessarily exclusive, perceptions of "energy security".

 Consumption Security: These are dilemmas springing from the primary objective of securing adequate, affordable and reliable supplies of energy for states that are net importers.

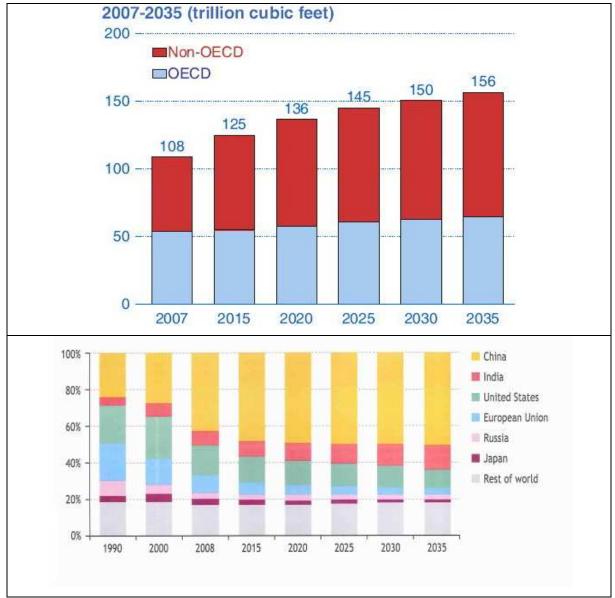


• **Supply Security:** These are dilemmas springing from the primary objective of maximizing economic benefits from fossil fuel production, which is especially true for states where energy products make up for the biggest share of public revenue.

Williams has discussed the three main theoretical paradigms that inform the relation between these two coextensive, albeit not identical perceptions of 'security' (idem. 2007). *Grosso modo* there are two sets of theoretical understandings of the supplier-consumer relationship, namely an actor-centered approach (realism-prospect theory) and a structure-oriented approach (constructivism).

	2005	2015	2030	2005-2030 ^a (%)	
OECD	5,542	6,135	6,663	0.7	
North America	2,786	3,139	3,501	0.9	
Europe	1,874	2,011	2,118	0.5	
Pacific	882	986	1,045	0.7	
Transition economies	1,080	1,266	1,422	1.1	
Russia	645	767	873	1.2	
Developing countries	4,635	7,045	10,433	3.3	
China	1,742	3,135	4,691	4.0	
India	537	804	1,508	4.2	
Other Asia	749	986	1,272	2.1	
Middle East	503	748	1,138	3.3	
Africa	606	729	954	1.8	
Latin America	500	643	869	2.2	
World ^b	11,429	14,636	18,739	2.0	
European Union	1,814	1,923	2,002	0.4	T-1.1. AT
N. d. a.					Table AI
Notes: ^a Average annual rate of growth; ^b international marine bunkers Source: World Energy Outlook (2007)					World primary ener demand by region (Mt





1. Realism/ Prospect Theory: This actor-centered paradigm focuses on a set of incentives that inform the policy orientation of individual actors in a negotiation or 'game.' Thus, for instance, net energy importers have a 'defensive motive' to dominate natural resources supply in order to stabilize the macro-economic environment, to preserve and sustain consumption patterns, etc; as ultima ratio, this strategic objective does not preclude military coercion in resource rich areas. By the same token, net exporters have a defensive interest either consolidate status quo asset valuations or, preferably, increase them.



2. Constructivism: A constructivist approach places an emphasis on the context of the importer-exporter relationship, because natural resources are ultimately the means to a socially defined end. Thus in the context of de-colonization, or indeed the break up of the USSR, natural resource revenue may become a symbol of asserting newfound national sovereignty.

The Geopolitical Complexities of the Euro-Azeri Relationship

Irrespectively of the theoretical lens one chooses to employ, it is evident that consumer-producer relations in the energy sector are currently being renegotiated. As a result of shifting patterns of international trade and economic development, it is widely thought that the energy market is exhibiting trends of 'marginal supply,' thus creating the foundations of severe contest for scarce fossil fuel resources. In this context, both the EU and the USA are experiencing severe threats to their quest to ensure energy security.

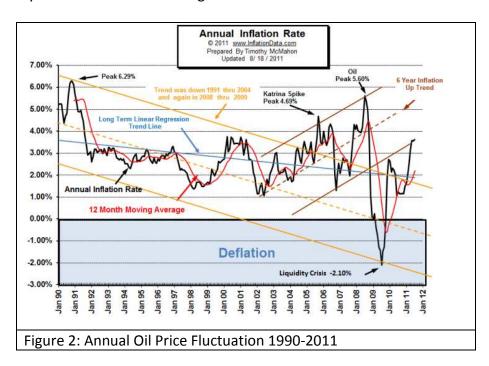
- USA: In 2010 the USA depended on energy imports for 58% of its oil consumption, that is, a dependency that is expected to become ever more acute as the economy expands along with demand for transportation. Thus US 'energy security' is critically threatened by oil supply disruptions, a fact that has led to the adoption of a number of 'defensive policies,' including the institution of Strategic Petroleum Reserves and global military engagement aimed at securing access and secure transit of resources (Diebold 2010).
- *EU*: As of 2011 the EU is depended on imports for 80% of its oil and 60% of its gas consumption and, therefore, threats to its energy security are of a more imminent nature (Commission 2011).

From this emerging market environment, Azerbaijan is a clear beneficiary because GDP growth patterns are strongly influenced if not correlated with international oil prices (see Figure 2). Specifically, the CIA world fact book notes on Azerbaijan:

"... High economic growth during 2006-08 was attributable to large and growing oil exports, but some non-export sectors also featured double-digit growth, spurred by growth in the construction, banking, and real estate sectors. In 2009,



economic growth remained above 9% even as oil prices moderated and growth in the construction sector cooled. In 2010, economic growth slowed to approximately 3.7%, although the impact of the global financial crisis was less severe than in many other countries in the region."



In any event, in 2010 oil and oil materials accounted for about 87% of Azeri exports, of which 55% was directly exported to the EU (Figure 3); this figure maybe misleading because a large share of exports to Russia are also largely divested to European markets. In any event, for Europe, the significance of Azerbaijan is more strategically significant than absolute energy flows suggest. At first sight, the Caspian reserves of oil and natural gas constitute merely 4% of global potential (Figure 4), although these figures may not be accurate given the recent announcement of TOTAL for the discovery of a significant natural gas field off the coast of Azerbaijan. However, no mistake should be made: the role of Azerbaijan and the Caspian region in general is geopolitically crucial for the EU. The reason is clear: the International Energy Agency expects that the EU will depend on Russia for gas consumption by about 70%. In this context, Azerbaijan becomes an envisaged 'strategic partner' for the EU, not merely as a supplier but also as a transit country, since it is from Baku that Europe can gain access to a significant supply source other than Russia.

¹ Gomez R. French Total announces new gas field in Caspian, NTN24 Wires, 2011/09/09



In fact, this geopolitical significance is underscored by the fact that the EU initiated a specific Action Plan for Azerbaijan under the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) in 2006; moreover, the European Commission signed a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with Azerbaijan on Energy Partnership and, most recently, adopted an unprecedented mandate to negotiate a legally binding treaty between the EU, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to build a Trans Caspian Pipeline System (12/09/2011).

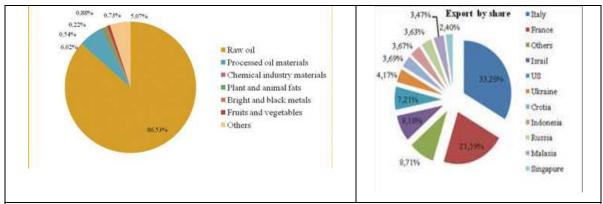
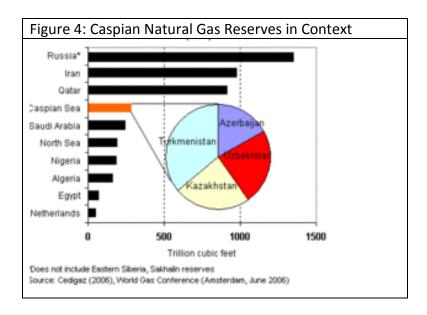


Figure 3: Significance of the oil industry for the Azeri Economy Source: Ibadoglu Gubad, Economic Review of Azerbaijan, 2010



Therefore, from the point of view of the EU as a consumer, Azerbaijan is geopolitically valued because of it seen as partner that can facilitate the 'hedging' of energy security risks involved from European singular exposure to Russian fossil fuel imports. And this is



an important factor since Russia has demonstrated that it will not hesitate to use its 'soft power' leverage in the energy sector in order to promote a wider strategic agenda. This is why the question of 'supply-security' rarely registers on the agenda of meetings held from Brussels to Washington, unless the discussion is centred on Russia. According to the Russian Federation's 'Energy Strategy of Russia to 2020' (August 2003), 'the role of the country in world energy markets to a large extent determines its geopolitical influence.' Putin thus swiftly nationalized the oil and gas sectors, gaining a near monopoly leverage in the European fossil fuel market by promoting two major pipeline projects (North Stream and South Stream) that would bypass Ukraine. Simultaneously, Russia seems to be presenting the EU with a soft-power Trojan horse designed to infringe upon the Union's multilateral solidarity by pursuing bilateral negotiations with individual member states.

As a reaction to Russia's affirmative stance on the energy market, the European Commission published a policy paper 'An Energy Policy for Europe' (2007) and in 2008 a 'Strategic Energy Review.' There the Commission proposed an action plan designed to loosen Gazprom's grip upon the European market. But, measures taken to this effect were largely inconsequential. Putin made deals with major German energy companies (Wintershall, BASF), having previously secured the services of former German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, as chief lobbyist. Thus the Baltic Sea pipeline project seems secure, despite the Commission's objections. And on the South Stream front, Putin made deals with Austria, Bulgaria and Greece, as well as Turkmenistan, with the aim of sabotaging the Commission-preferred Nabucco pipeline (Roubanis & Koppa 2010, Camperon 2010). From this point of view, the EU has no alternative but to engage ever more closely with Azerbaijan, if it is to ameliorate its current position of unquestionable dependence on Russian imports.

Apart from Russia, there is another relationship mediating the strategic gravity of Azerbaijan as an energy-security partner for the EU, namely the Turkish-EU relationship. Turkey stands between the EU and Azerbaijan in two ways.





First, Turkey is bounded to Azerbaijan geographically. More often than not, Turkish analysts are eager to underscore the centrality of Turkey as an energy hub, since it is the indispensable transit country connecting the EU market with the Russian Caucasus (Blue Stream Pipeline) and the Caspian basin (South Caucasus Pipeline, BTC). Clearly, for Europe the road to Baku goes via Ankara. However, Turkey is not single-mindedly committed to enhancing EU's energy security. Turkey is boosting its geopolitical significance as a complementary building block to Russia's mastering role in the European energy-security architecture, whilst maintaining all options open for future business ventures that may deviate from Moscow's preferences. The key objective for Turkey is to become an indispensable catalyst for the promotion of any and every diplomatic initiative rather than passively choose sides. In the words of the former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer and chief Nabucco-project lobbyist:

"It can't be said often enough: Turkey is situated in a highly sensitive geopolitical location, particularly where Europe's security is concerned. The eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean, the western Balkans, the Caspian region and the southern Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East are all areas where the West will achieve nothing or very little without Turkey's support. And this is true in terms not only of security policy, but also of energy policy if you're looking for alternatives to Europe's growing reliance on Russian energy supplies. (...)
Europe's security in the 21st century will be determined to a significant degree in its neighbourhood in the southeast – exactly where Turkey is crucial for Europe's security interests now and, increasingly, in the future. But, rather than binding Turkey as closely as possible to Europe and the West, European policy is driving Turkey into the arms of Russia and Iran."²

It should be noted that all competing scenarios for the emerging European energy architecture are built around the notion of Turkish centrality; and this is the result of Turkish diplomacy, not merely location. Not putting all its eggs in one basket, Turkey only reluctantly endorsed the official Russian offer for the Blue Stream II project in 2005, giving priority to the US-EU sponsored Nabucco project, intended to connect Caspian energy supplies via Turkey and then Bulgaria, Romania, Aystria and Hungary. Russia thus turned

²Fischer Joschka, 'Who 'Lost' Turkey?,' Zaman, 01.07.2010





to the Balkans, established an alliance with Italy, and pursued the design of an alternative route from the Russian Black Sea coast via an offshore pipeline to Bulgaria; however, Bulgaria is stalling the project either on the basis of economic or environmental considerations, which seems to be favoring the Nabucco project. While a final investment decision on either the Nabucco or the South Stream project is yet to be made, neither Russia nor the EU can afford to exclude Turkey from their fossil fuel grand strategy (idem Roubanis & Koppa 2010).

The second reason that Baku's relationship to the EU is mediated by Ankara is political; in fact, it is more a Turkish political argument rather than a fact. Beginning from the premise that the ENP is a system of economic and political cooperation designed to foster progressive integration with its neighbours on the basis of (EU) values, norms and practices, Turkish analysts are eager to suggest that this is not possible in Azerbaijan or the wider Caspian region. For example, Unar Eris points out that, time and again, EU progress reports will often indicate the failure of Azerbaijan to align itself with the key objectives of the agreed upon Action Plan, a fact that he attributes to the futility of projecting European standards and values as 'shared values;' however, the conclusion of this observation is of questionable value as he effectively asserts that as the only secular Muslim democracy in the region, Turkey can somehow help 'these countries' — amongst whom Azerbaijan — to tailor their political system after the requirements of the ENP; these Turkish good services are especially significant since the prospect of membership is not on offer for 'these countries' (Unal Eris 2011).

³Yurdakul Y, 'EU policy drives Turkey in the arms of Russia,' *European Energy Review*, .02.06.2010





⁴ EuroActiv, 'Bulgaria gets cold feet over South Stream,' 14.07.2009; cf. also Sofia News Agency, 'Russia Prods Bulgaria over South Stream,' Belene Projects, 29.06.2010

^{*} The ideas expressed in this article reflect the personal views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the institutions of which they are a part. Written largely in a polemical style, the article is meant to introduce some food for thought and remains open for further elaboration and discussion."

In making such claims, Eris is in good company, for the gulf of political cultures between the EU and the Caspian region is widely admitted, although it is not clear how Turkish proximity alone will suffice to 'bridge this gap.' Indeed, as Hoffman corroborates, the Azeri culture of multilateral engagement is informed by structural realities not uncommon to former CIS countries:

Projects directly and immediately benefiting Azerbaijan are welcomed, with little attention devoted to long-term structural integration projects and steps toward supranational structures. Hence, a cooperation practice within the RO's {Regional Organizations} is preferred which does not limit the sovereignty of Azerbaijan on any issue. Azerbaijan's approach is shared by the majority of post-Soviet republics as dynamics within CIS, BSEC and GUAM show (Hoffman 2011).

In sum, from the point of view of consumption security, the EU-Azeri relationship is seen as an independent variable to EU-Russian relations and, trivially, as a dependent variable to EU-Turkish relations. Therefore, in order to address the theme of threats and opportunities for Azerbaijan in the current geopolitical environment, we must come to understand the broader transformation of these coextensive relationships.

Most recently, Philip Hanson has compiled a briefing paper that examines precisely the shifting dynamic of EU-Russia-Turkey relations, effectively describing the transformation of this geopolitical environment that should inform Azeri foreign policy (Hanson 2011). Hanson asserts that until now the EU remains for both Russia and the EU an unparallel economic and gravitational force in both political and economic terms. However, the dynamics of these two relationships are neither homogenous between them nor necessarily parallel to EU's objectives. In fact, the geopolitical trend is that the EU is loosing its 'gravity' in the region for two reasons.

Currently the economic gravity of the EU is becoming increasingly uncertain. Both
Turkey and Russia have reasons to doubt that European recovery, if and when it
occurs, can sustain their current pace of economic growth and are seeking to
'hedge their risks' by cultivating relationships with other markets. In sum, Europe





- remains an indispensable trade partner but other partners are increasing their leverage.
- The traditional framing of EU policy, which is largely informed by constructivist and neo-functionalist notions of 'community-building,' has been largely discredited for two reasons: first, because there is widespread disbelief that the acquis is neither a coherent body of common norms and values actually shared by all EU member states nor that the enlargement process is an open and fair roadmap. In any event, Russia is favouring a bilateral diplomatic framework with EU member states, which defies the notion of recognizing EU as a normative superpower; Turkey in turn is gradually questioning the legitimacy of the reform process, especially since the bilateral agenda of Turkish-EU relations has spilled over to the EU-Turkish enlargement agenda.

Synthesis: Azerbaijan in a Floating Region

There is no right theoretical framework in diplomacy. More often than not, the theoretical perspective or 'diplomatic culture' of a state tends to operate as a self-fulfilling prophecy for its behaviour. The spill-over of a human rights agenda to energy decisions is obviously daunting for many states that engage with the EU; it is less of a concern for Russia. The differences in style and traditions of diplomacy are largely connected to the self-perception of individual 'actors.' Obviously, as an ever-closer union founded on theoretical assertions of functionalism, the EU has emerged as a post-state actor that regards itself as one of the most advanced organizations of multilateral governance in the world; and it is also true that for all its deficiencies in terms of military might, economic cohesion and the notorious 'democratic deficit,' the EU largely perceives itself and was recognized by others as a normative superpower (Manners 2002). Russia on the other hand has always perceived itself as a post-imperial Great Power of global significance. In sum, rather than opting for one paradigm or another, it is worth noting that different diplomatic cultures are applicable in a different context.





If Hoffman's assessment is right (Op. Cit. 2011), Azeri diplomatic culture is informed by a realist or actor-centred perspective. This fact, as she notes, has not prevented Azerbaijan to create 'an impressive list' of Regional Organization (RO) memberships: the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), the Organization for Economic Development and Democracy (GUAM), the Council of Europe, the Non-Alignment Movement and, since 2004, a corporate relationship with the EU within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. In sum, although Azerbaijan has a culture oriented towards the fortification rather than dilution or transcendence of national sovereignty, it has established a nexus of RO memberships that – as Hoffman notes – fortifies its sovereignty. But, the question is of course how.

First of all, by gaining access to a number of international policy *fora*, Azerbaijan has managed to transcend the nexus of bilateral relations, sidelining the inherent asymmetry of bilateral relations. Thus Azerbaijan is able to attract Foreign Direct Investment in the energy sector through projects like Nabucco, by dealing simultaneously with the EU and Turkey; which has vastly increased the negotiating leverage of Azerbaijan vis-a-vis both geopolitical powers, reducing the inherent asymmetry of a strictly bilateral setting of negotiations. Secondly, this variable membership has allowed Azerbaijan to capitalize on its strategic significance as an energy producer in order to promote a greater foreign policy agenda. For instance, as Hoffman notes, within the realms of OIC and GUAM Azerbaijan has managed to gain a legal or ethical upper hand in the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute. In sum, multilateral engagement has clearly benefited Azerbaijan, although in the current context there are clear systemic risks.

The recent (12/09/2011) 'unprecedented commitment' of the European Commission to elevate the status of diplomatic engagement with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan to a





bilateral Treaty – committing all parties to the construction of a TransCaspian pipeline system – seems promising for two reasons:

- First, because it increases the centrality of Azerbaijan for the European natural gas market, that is, a fuel that is increasingly important since the nuclear disaster in Fukushima and Germany's commitment to a nuclear phase-out by 2022.
- Secondly, because the envisaged infrastructure promises to offer Caspian nations a
 more substantial alternative to the Russian pipeline network (Tsereteli 2008),
 which is central to their supply security; in effect, if this project is realized, the
 supply security of Turkmenistan and perhaps other nations as well will
 effectively depend upon smooth cooperation with Baku.

However, a Treaty envisaging an infrastructure is no substitute for existing infrastructures. With the current decline in EU's economic gravity, there are reasonable doubts as to whether or not such an infrastructure can be realized. If this is true, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are being asked to potentially alienate Russia for a project that is still on the drawing board with no guaranteed financial foundations. Moreover, as Turkey seems to be distancing itself from the EU over the question of Cyprus – whose veto effectively blocks Turkey from opening up the energy chapter – Azerbaijan must also deal with the risk of being held hostage to a possible collision course between Brussels and Ankara.

Meanwhile, as promising and flourishing are the relations between Ankara and Moscow, the solidity of this relationship for the future to come should not be taken fore granted. Over the threat of Ankara to send its fleet over if Cyprus dared to begin drilling, Moscow responded by sending its own fleet. Moreover, bilateral loans were offered from Moscow to Nicosia in favourable terms, easing the fiscal pressure that the island was suffering.

At the same time, on the part of the EU, 'upgrading' the framework of bilateral relations to a Treaty status probably signals that the Turkish 'political argument' for a politically mediated relationship between Baku and Brussels is currently loosing currency. It seems





that in the near future to come, the EU will be able to negotiate with Azerbaijan without a rigid set of value/normative demands. Moreover, Azerbaijan and other Caspian nations cannot really afford to invest either Moscow or Ankara with an effective veto over market access.

Options to Explore: taking multilateral tactics to their logical conclusion

Hedging strategic policy risks is a delicate operation in the current geopolitical environment. Obviously grand strategy policy recommendations cannot be offered at this level, for analysts usually lack critical intelligence available only at the highest executive level. However, as the Azeri-EU relations are structurally tied to EU-Russian and EU-Turkish relations, it is clear that the road towards materialization of much needed investment in the energy sector of the Black Sea/Caspian region is paved with uncertainty. However, on a tactical level, it should be noted that the combination of relatively high fossil fuel prices – that has kept Azeri growth going at a healthy pace – combined with the unfolding public debt crisis in the EU, may offer significant opportunities for Azerbaijan.

First of all, following the Kazakh example, which pursued oil-refinery acquisitions in Romania just before the economic crisis erupted, Azerbaijan is now presented with the unprecedented opportunity for asset acquisition in Southern Europe and the Balkans at unprecedented prices. Such 'strategic acquisitions' would allow for the replenishing of know-how reserves of the Azeri energy industry; moreover, direct access to transit infrastructures and the European retail market would 'enlarge the pie' of negotiation with regional energy powers, transcending the seemingly inescapable determinism of geographic location. Gazprom and BOTAS have already taken part in this merger and acquisitions 'game,' which has vastly amplified the influence of Russia and Turkey in Eurasian markets. SOCAR could emulate or even expand the scope of this strategy, adding to its acquisitions companies specialized in cutting edge construction materials, shipping, plastics, fibbers or, in sum, anything that adds value to the fossil fuel primary sources available in Azerbaijan. Arguably, this is the single most important competitive advantage





of state-owned (SOE) vis-a-vis privately owned enterprises, namely that their assets can be placed directly to the service of greater foreign policy objectives. Incidentally, this would provide Azerbaijan with the opportunity to make a qualitative leap in the diversification of its economic foundations and limit its dependence on FDI and foreign know-how.

Secondly, Azerbaijan may pursue a more active engagement in the political process at substate level, that is, a self-referential capacity to be present, lobby and gather intelligence in major energy-decision power centres: Moscow, Ankara, Washington, and Brussels. This will enable Baku to participate in strategic policy development rather than simply face 'either or dilemmas' when actor incentives have already been defined. And it is clear that because of its RO membership and exposure to different diplomatic cultures, Baku has a competitive advantage in this particular power-game, which in non-other than its traditional cultural ties with the former FSU space, the Turkic communities of the Black-Sea/Caspian region and the close ties with the Euro-Atlantic community that it has so laboriously cultivated.

In sum, Azerbaijan maybe actively engaged in incentive or community building, which maybe the logical way forward from its already developed RO engagement strategy. Towards this end, the recently announced establishment of an Energy Center as a specialized unit of Azerbaijan's Diplomatic Academy maybe a constructive step.

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http://ec.europa.eu/energy/international/security of supply/cooperation en.htm

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